

GBC LIFE GROUP RESOURCES 2024

Series: Our Extra Ordinary Life Together

Introduction to GBC Life Group Resources

Life Groups are a critical ministry of our extra ordinary life together at Gynea Baptist Church. These resources are produced each Monday as a companion to the sermon series. Choosing to use these resources facilitates our sense of community as we share together around common themes and passages.

Each week's resource includes a brief overview of the sermon series and of the sermon (which can be accessed on GBC's YouTube channel or via your favourite podcast platform), along with a series of activities to do together. Don't forget that The Big Ill podcast comes out mid-week as another companion to the sermon.

These range from questions to ask, prayers to pray, practices to try, and biblical passages to read (usually in the time between Life Group meetings). Feel free to pick and choose what will work well for your group – you don't have to do everything!

In 2024 we have also begun to include some additional information that we are encouraging our Life Group leaders, as leaders of GBC, to be sharing with your group. These include reflecting on a particular mission commitment of GBC, promoting and praying for GBC initiatives, and celebrating what God is doing in and through our community of faith.

If you have feedback on these resources, please email Nicole Jones: office@gyneabaptist.org.au.



While We Wait–Studies in Chronicles

While We Wait is our Old Testament series for 2024 and we will be dipping in and out of Chronicles over the course of the year. This first block is only two weeks long (March 10 & 17), but we will return to it after Easter.

Chronicles was written to provide God's people with a model for how to live while they were waiting, with increasing desperation, for the promises of God to be fulfilled. Part of our extra ordinary life together is to encourage one another while we wait for the promises of God to restore and renew all things in Christ Jesus to be fulfilled. I believe that there are important and timely lessons for us to learn in Chronicles and look forward to diving more deeply into this text over the course of the year.

A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

Key Text(s): 1 Chronicles 10:1-11:3 (The death of Saul)

In the genealogical records, the Chronicler has drawn our attention to two themes that will inform his reforming history of Israel. First, that worship lies at the heart of the waiting community (demonstrated in the genealogical records of Levi – the priestly tribe – in the middle of the genealogies) and, second, that the community to whom he is writing is the community through whom the Lord intends to fulfill his plans and purposes in the world (demonstrated by their correspondence to the first group of records which reach back to creation).

At the conclusion of the genealogies, we are prepared for a story about Israel, but the story that the Chronicler begins with – the death of Saul and his sons on Mount Gilboa – is unconventional. Both in tone and in chronology it catches us off-guard. Of all the places to start the story of Israel, this is unexpected. Why not start with creation and God's purposes in it? What would have been wrong with beginning with the promises of the Lord to Abraham to bless all nations through his descendants? Wouldn't the exodus from Egypt and the covenant of the Lord with

Israel to be a living demonstration to the world of what it looked like to live in relationship with the one true God have been a good place to begin? Why begin with the monarchy? And not at the beginning of the monarchy, but with the last hours and final resting place of King Saul?

While all those places would have made perfect sense as starting points, the Chronicler has carefully chosen this story and, I believe, there are some good reasons for that.

First, the story of the battle on Mount Gilboa – a devastating defeat for Israel that results not only in the death of the king and his sons, but also with the exile of the people from their homes (v. 7) – holds some parallels for the Chronicler’s original audience. They were the descendants of those who had suffered a devastating defeat and who had been exiled from their land. While their descendants – the Chronicler’s audience – had returned to the land, they had returned to a land not truly their own. They were part of the Persian Empire with little independence or autonomy. By starting here, the Chronicler invites his readers to face their situation honestly and to gauge how desperate they were for the Lord to do something about it.

Second, the Chronicler’s opening tale includes his own editorial commentary in vv. 13-14 where he boldly states why Saul died. “Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the LORD.” There are three things to note about this description. First, the term “unfaithful” which is an important one for the Chronicler. This relational term implies more than simple obedience to the letter of the law, but to the intent of the law. We will see examples in Chronicles of how faithfulness is more important to the Lord than strict adherence to the letter of the law. Second, he did not inquire of the Lord. Seeking the Lord is a key characteristic of the faithful waiting community. Third, there is a strong link between one’s actions and the Lord’s response. In this case, Saul’s unfaithfulness is tied to an event (consulting a medium) that occurs just before his death, rather than one of the events that led to his removal from the throne (see 1 Samuel 13:1-15 and 15:1-35 for the two central acts of unfaithfulness). Throughout his narrative, the Chronicler draws our attention to the importance of our present-tense discipleship; what we do right now matters more than our past faithfulness.

Each of these invite us to consider how faithfully we are following the intention of the Lord, how quickly we turn to seek the Lord, and how present-tense our faithfulness is.

Finally, the Chronicler reminds his readers that their wait is not for some-thing, but for some-one; the Lord’s anointed. In this case, David. This is the theological heart of Chronicles; that the people have been waiting, and continue to wait, for the anointed one of the Lord; the Messiah. It is through his king that the purposes of the Lord for his people and the world will be fulfilled. As the New Testament people of God we know that the one we are waiting for is Jesus!

Questions to Ask

1. The Chronicler’s opening story invites us to consider what we are waiting for God to do and to ask how urgently we want him to act. As we looked at last week, our hope can erode to the point that we give up on what we are waiting for. What are we waiting for God to do? How desperate are we for his actions?
2. Faithfulness is a relational term that is more focused on intent than perfection; with the spirit of the command rather than the letter of the command. Consider what it means to be faithful (in a marriage or friendship) and discuss how this might inform our relationship with God.
3. What does it mean to you to seek the Lord? What and who are we tempted to inquire of rather than the Lord?
4. Part of the Chronicler’s program is to remind his readers (and us) of the importance of a present-tense discipleship where our actions right now are met by God’s response. Past faithfulness is not as significant as present faithfulness. How present-tense is your discipleship? How do you maintain a present-tense faithfulness?

A Prayer to Pray

1. Pray for an increased sense of urgency for God to act and bring the specific areas you want God to act in before him.

A Practice to Try

1. If you created a genealogy of faith (see last week), share them with the group.
2. Keep a “faithfulness” journal. Each day consider examples of faithfulness (of any kind) that you have witnessed and what they potentially teach you about faithfulness to the Lord.

Readings to Read This Week

Read Saul’s backstory.

1. 1 Samuel 9-10
2. 1 Samuel 11
3. 1 Samuel 13:1-15
4. 1 Samuel 15
5. 1 Samuel 28:3-25

A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

We hope that our Life Groups help people feel connected to one another and committed to our mission together as a community of faith. To that end we encourage Life Group leaders to remind your group about our mission commitments. Each week we’ll draw attention to one or more of those commitments that fits neatly with the topic or theme. (See “GBC Mission Commitments” document for an overview of our commitments).

Both our purpose statement – to participate in God’s grand plans to restore and renew the world – or our vision – to see lives changed by Jesus – describe what we are waiting for and may provide a fruitful place to discuss how hard it is to wait.

A GBC Initiative to Promote/Celebrate

Each week we will provide you with a key aspect of our community news that we would encourage you to remind your Life Group about.

1. Annual General Meeting. Sunday March 24 (11:30-1:00) is our AGM where we receive the annual report for 2023 and hear a few reports on the start of the year. Please encourage your group to read the report and to attend if they are able.
2. Our Easter services include a Tenebrae service on the Thursday evening (a service of shadows in which there is no sermon but only a series of readings reflecting on the growing darkness that surrounded Jesus), Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.

Research by the National Church Life Survey found that 42% of Australians would accept an invitation to an Easter service. Who might you invite to our Easter Sunday service?

Additional Resources

The mission commitments of GBC

We have made several references to the mission commitments of GBC. This is the title we have given to our vision, purpose, and values. These will no doubt be familiar to you, but we thought it might be helpful to provide a clear overview of them.

Our mission commitments begin with **John 20:21, “As the Father sent me, I am sending you.”** These words contain a central belief about what we are called to as a community of faith: that we are to continue to ministry and mission of Jesus to restore and renew everything according to the will of the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we reflected on this commission, we formulated a mission statement to attempt to summarise what we wanted to do. While we don't refer to it very often, it is helpful to see the progression of our thought. The **mission** we formulated was: **Everywhere we go and in everything we do, we will invite everyone to follow Jesus.**

Taking the pattern we find in the Gospels we affirm that anyone can begin to follow Jesus; regardless of what they believe about his, what they know about him, and without changing their lives. When Jesus called his first disciples, he demanded none of these things; only inviting them to follow him. Over time they learned about him which challenged their beliefs about him and raised the implications for their lives, but initially, they only needed to be willing to follow.

The individual transformation that comes as people place their trust in Jesus and the commission that he has sent us to participate in led to a simple **vision statement**; what we want to see. **We want to see lives changed by Jesus.**

All of this took shape in our **purpose** as a community of faith – our “why”. **To be a community of faith who courageously take up the invitation of God the Father to participate in His grand plan to restore and renew all things in Christ Jesus through the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit.**

It was only as we gained clarity on our purpose that we identified a set of values that we believed were aligned with these mission commitments. The five values we identified are:

- To be **On-Purpose**. Intentional to create margins in our lives to participate in God's mission.
- To be **Big-Hearted**. Generosity in all our resources as a reflection of God's own generosity to us is a central value.
- To be **Whole-Life Learners**. As followers of Jesus we are called to ongoing transformation of our lives; learning to be more like Jesus. This also invites humility as we recognise our ongoing need of change.
- To be **Others-Focused**. To demonstrate love and care to others, over and above ourselves is a key characteristic of followers of Jesus.
- To be **Trust-Worthy**. We don't want to get in the way as people begin to follow Jesus. We want to reflect this value in our commitment to being a Safe Church.

These are the mission commitments that we hope will serve to give us some common language that reminds us of our unity together as followers of Jesus and the community of faith here at GBC.